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ABSTRACT

This booklet about the cultural background of Cambodia is one of three booklets that serve as a foundation for understanding the cultural diversity and values of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese students. Cambodia, or Kampuchea, has a population of about 7,000,000 and is located in mainland Southeast Asia. Its history is divided into the following periods: (1) pre-9th century; (2) the Angkor period; (3) the decline; (4) the French control; (5) post-World War II; and (6) the Khmer Rouge era. The value system is a mixture of Khmer, Indian, and French traditions, influenced by Brahmanism and Theravada Buddhism. The extended family is the basic unit of society. The official language is "Khmer." Traditional educational methods rely on memorization, but the formal school system was destroyed during the Communist invasion of 1975. Theravada Buddhism is the official religion. Khmer art is derived from Indian culture. Khmer literature is the oldest among the Southeast Asian countries. Traditional dance drama, based on mythological and religious themes, is preserved by the University of Fine Arts. Crafts include working silver and gold, carving ebony and stone, and making silk. Weddings and funerals are the most important and elaborate ceremonies. New Year, the most popular of many holidays and festivals, is a three-day celebration. Descriptions of six games played by both adults and children, a brief example of leisure reading, one map, and three illustrations are included. An explanation of the Cambodian calendar and a 32-item bibliography are appended. (FMW)

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SUN-HIM CHHIM

INTRODUCTION to CAMBODIAN CULTURE

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Chapter I

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Cambodia, or Kampuchea, is a country about the size of Washington state, located in mainland Southeast Asia. It is bounded on the east by Vietnam, on the north by Laos, on the west by Thailand, and on the south by the part of the Pacific Ocean known as the Gulf of Siam. It has been at the crossroads of ocean trade from both India and China, which is the origin of the term *Indochina*. During the colonial days, Cambodia was part of *French* Indochina, along with Vietnam and Laos (Thailand and Burma were *British* Indochina). Cambodia's population in 1970 was estimated at about 7,000,000, more populous than Laos, but less populous than Vietnam. In recent decades, Cambodia has been considered an underpopulated country with an underdeveloped economy.

TOPOGRAPHY

Cambodia's surface is generally sea level to 300 feet, with mountain ranges in the north and southeast. Three-quarters of the land consists of the flat plains of the Mekong River basin, as it flows from China and Laos towards Vietnam and the sea. This flat central area has few hills over 300 feet in elevation. The Elephant Mountains and the Cardamon Mountains, 6,000 feet at their highest, lie between the Mekong basin and the Gulf of Siam. The Dangkrek Mountains lie in the north, towards Laos, and averaging about 1600 feet above sea level. There are plateaus in the northeast area, separated from the Dangkrek Mountains by the Mekong Valley, which serves as the major communication route in mainland Southeast Asia.

CLIMATE, SOILS AND DRAINAGE

The climate of Cambodia has the monsoonal characteristics of south and southeast Asia. There are two seasons, the wet and the dry. The warm rainy season begins in May and lasts through October, while the dry cold season marks the remainder of the year. Temperatures are rather uniform all over the basin area with an average annual mean of around 77°F. The maximum mean is about 83°F, and the minimum mean about 72°F. Maximum temperatures of over 90°F are common and may rise to over 100°F just before the rainy season. Minimum

temperatures below 50°F are rare.

The yearly rainfall in the Cambodian basin averages around 70 inches, but there is great variation from year to year, as seen in the recent years of severe drought. Rainfall is heaviest along the southwestern mountain range, which may receive up to 200 inches annually. The relative humidity is high at night throughout the year, normally in excess of 90 percent. During the daytime, it averages below 50 percent in the dry season and remains above 60 percent in the rainy season.

Cambodia's great "rice basket" is the rich alluvial soils around the Tonle Sap, the great lake in the center of Cambodia. These soils are replenished by the annual flooding of the Tonle Sap, and the periodic flooding of the Mekong River. The provinces around Phnom Penh and south are made up of these fertile soils. The second major type of soil, more widely distributed, is red and brown in color and highly weathered. In the lowland or in mountainous areas, these soils are mostly covered with forests, although in a few places they underlie savanna vegetation. Most of these soils have only moderate to low potential for agriculture. However, with fertilizers and proper management, they can be used for the production of food crops or commercial crops.

All of Cambodia is drained by the Mekong River system and the Tonle Sap. The Mekong River flows for over two thousand miles from the mountains in Southern China to the sea, and has about a fifth of its length passing through Cambodia. It has many tributaries, and it has always played a crucial role in Cambodian life. This river system provides water to irrigate Cambodia's rice fields, shelter for billions of fish, and, until the present time, served as transportation routes throughout the year.

The most important of the tributaries is the Tonle Sap River which connects the Mekong to Tonle Sap Lake. This unusual river changes the direction of its flow twice a year. The Great Lakes are very much expanded during the rainy season, covering nearly a seventh of Cambodia's surface. During the dry season this large reservoir shrinks to a tenth of its rainy season size. At this point, it is the richest fresh water fishing ground in the world.

VEGETATION AND FAUNA

About 75 percent of Cambodia's land area is forested. The central lowland region is covered with rice paddies, fields of other dry crops (such as corn, bean, peanut or tobacco), expanses of

tall grass and thinly wooded areas. Savanna is the prevailing vegetation of the transitional plains. The high plateaus of the eastern part are covered with deciduous forests and grasslands. In the mountainous areas to the north grow broadleaf evergreen forests with trees over 100 feet high emerging from thick undergrowths of vines, rattans, palms, bamboos and numerous woody and herbaceous ground plants. The southwestern ranges are covered with open forests of pines at higher elevations, while the rain-soaked seaward slopes are blanketed with impenetrable rain forests.

Growing wild or cultivated, the wide variety of fruits of Cambodia includes breadfruit, jackfruit, durian, mango, papaya, mangosteen, rambutan and bananas.

Cambodia is home to elephants, wild oxen, tigers, panthers, leopards, bears, and a large number of small game. Common birds are herons, cranes, grouse, pheasant, peacocks, pelicans, cormorants, and wild ducks. Many varieties of snakes are especially dangerous including the cobra, the king cobra, the banded krait, and Russell's viper.

CAMBODIA
(KHMER REPUBLIC)
THAILAND
LAOS
SOUTH VIETNAM
Ubon Ratchathani
Nakhon Ratchasima
Buriram
Pakse
Samrong
ANGKOR (Ruins)
Siem Reap
Battambang
Kompong Thom
Stung Treng
Pursat
Kompong Chhnang
Kompong Cham
Kratie
Pleiku
Ban Me Thuot
Chanthaburi
Udong
PHNOM PENH
Kompong Speu
Kompong Kantuol
Chamkar Takeo
Kampot
Kompong Som
Phu Quoc Island
Ha Tien
Gulf of Siam
Tay Ninh
SAIGON
Bien Hoa
Ca Mau
Mekong River Delta
Quan Long
South China Sea
BURMA
S. VIETNAM
Bay of Bengal
THAILAND
South China Sea
VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
MALAYSIA
SINGAPORE
BRUNEI
Indian Ocean
Sumatra

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Chapter II

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The importance of Cambodia's historical and cultural contributions to Southeast Asia is much greater than its presently much reduced, almost eliminated, territory and political power. At its highest point, from 11th to 13th centuries, the Khmer State stretched across a vast area of the Indochinese peninsula incorporating, besides present day Cambodia, the southern part of modern Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

Tracing its roots back to the Kingdom of Funan, founded in the first century A.D., the rich history can be divided into six distinct periods: (1) Cambodia before the 9th century, (2) the Angkor period, (3) the decline, (4) the French control, (5) after World War II period, and (6) the Khmer Rouge era.

THE PERIOD BEFORE THE 9TH CENTURY

Archaeological study shows that parts of present Cambodia were inhabited by people of the Neolithic culture beginning in the second millennium B.C. Around the start of the Christian Era the inhabitants had developed relatively organized societies with civilization beyond the primitive stage.

Moving by land and sea routes from regions north of Indochina, migrants passed through the area in successive waves. The first group was composed of Australoid inhabitants followed by Melanesians and then by Indonesians. The languages spoken by the various groups were determined as having a common distant origin, the dominant tongue being the Mon-Khmer. The present day Khmer or Cambodian language is the direct derivative of the then Mon-Khmer.

Little is known about human life in the area, before the establishment of the Funan State in the first century A.D. Settlements were close to lakes and rivers; the inhabitants engaged in agriculture and raised domestic animals such as cattle and pigs. Hunting was done with bow and arrow with arrowheads made of polished stone, bone and iron. Metal cultures reached the Cambodian region well before the first century A.D.

True historical knowledge begins with the rise of Funan. This earliest and most significant of the Indianized states is

claimed by its inhabitants as being the first Khmer Kingdom. Funan was located on the delta of the Mekong River. During the early period, the population was concentrated in the area along the Mekong and Tonle Sap Rivers. Traffic and communications were mostly waterborne. The country was a natural area fit for the development of fishing and rice-growing economy. Sea transportation played an important part in the development of Funan but the expansion of the country continued to have agriculture as its base. Evidence shows the existence of an extensive irrigation system in the heart of the region at the time. Indianization appears to have given Funan its character and influenced its development. The process was fostered by frequent contacts with visiting traders, travelers, and diplomats. The Sanskrit language was extensively used among the elite; an Indian legal code was put into effect and an Indian alphabet introduced.

Funan reached its summit during the reign of Kaudinya II as he maintained high internal security and good external relations with neighboring states. At the start of the sixth century, frequent civil wars and dynastic struggle seriously undermined the Kingdom's stability, making it easier prey to incursions by hostile neighbors. The latter part of the sixth century saw the country attacked and overtaken by Chenla, another Kingdom from the North.

Chenla did not consolidate its domination until the seventh century. The people of Chenla are known to have been Khmers. After their conquest of Funan, they engaged in a course of expansion for the next 300 years. For some time, they controlled central and upper Laos, portions of present day South Vietnam, Western Cambodia and Southern Thailand. The Chenla Kings preserved intact the Funanese governmental, religious and social institutions. However, in the eighth century, factional disputes among members of the royal family resulted in splitting the country into two rival northern and southern states: Land Chenla and Maritime Chenla. There followed a period of some turmoil and confusion. Later in the eighth century, as the Land Chenla remained relatively stable, the Maritime Chenla became a vassal of a Javanese dynasty. A last ruler of this latter Chenla with ties to Sambhupura, a minor Khmer state, ascended to the throne as Jayavarman II. He liberated the country from the Javanese suzerainty and finally unified the two segments of the nation.

KAMBUJA OR ANGKOR PERIOD:

The Angkor period, following the Chenla era, began early in the ninth century. As the Khmer empire continued its expansion, the state increasingly became an imperial theocracy. The deified monarch was the designated protector of the state religion, guardian of the sacred law, proprietor of all the land, and owner of all the Kingdom and its subjects. All the 4,000 officials were royal appointees from central to provincial administrations.

By a series of wars during the reign of Suryavarman II, the Khmer territory was further extended to encompass areas of present North Vietnam and those as far west as the Irrawaddy River in Burma. Suryavarman II was also the builder of Angkor Wat, considered to be the greatest single architectural work in Southeast Asia. Under him was developed an extensive network of roads and a large irrigation and reservoir system. Thirty years of dynastic dispute following his reign resulted in costly war against the Chams who destroyed Angkor in 1177. Jayavarman VII, in whose reign the empire reached its greatest territorial extent, repulsed the invaders. He built the great capital city complex of Angkor Thom, including its ten miles of walls and the temple of Bayon.

The people benefited from the effective management of the extensive irrigation system and accepted the monarchy as an authority preserving the law and order; however the building programs and the expansionist wars necessitated heavy taxes and forced labor. The people's discontent was expressed in a series of revolts. Upon the death of Jayavarman VII, the Khmer Empire entered a period of decline. In the thirteenth century independent Thai Kingdoms were established in the former Khmer territory. In 1353 a Thai army captured Angkor which was recaptured later. Angkor was looted a number of times and the Thai carried away thousands of Khmer artists and scholars. Continuous warfare between the Thai and the Khmer culminated with the Siamese capture and sack of Angkor Thom in 1431. This resulted in the abandonment of the City as the capital of the nation. The fall of Angkor marked the end of a definite cultural cycle which produced magnificent architecture with temples, monuments, sculptures, decorations, inscriptions, etcetera.

THE DECLINE

Many factors were involved in the fall of the Khmer Empire. Some western analysts even blame on the change to Theravada Buddhism as an important one. However, material factors were more obviously responsible. One of the most important ones was the fragility of the economic system. Under constant pressure from the Thais and the Chams, it was difficult to maintain the delicate irrigation system upon which Angkor's survival depended. The reservoirs and canals needed constant attention. Damage to the system during actual attacks by enemies and the sending off of thousands of prisoners of war weakened the economic base of the country further. Some analysts discount that malaria, spreading from the destroyed hydraulic system, played a part in the decline of Angkor. Confrontations between members of the royal family definitely weakened the Khmers. All the conditions were there and the stage set for the collapse of the Angkorian empire. After the abandonment of the City, the Khmer court moved south to Longvek, near the present-day Phnom Penh. The new capital was protected by stone fortifications, and within its limits were built a number of Buddhist temples. The then King Ang Chan invaded Siam in 1531 and repelled subsequent counterattacks. In one of his many invasions of Siam in 1564, he reached the Siamese capital city of Ayutthya, to find it occupied by the Burmese.

Ang Chan's successors continued to attack Siam; however, in the 1580's, emerged a powerful new Siamese King. The Cambodian capital of Longvek was captured by the Thais in 1594, and for the first time an alien political control was established over the Khmer state. About this time the Chinese migrants came to establish themselves in Phnom Penh and by early 1600's made up about one seventh of the total population. The Chinese lived in separate quarters which were run more or less independently from the Khmer authorities.

European countries, expanding their trade in Southeast Asia in the 16th century, showed little interest in Cambodia. The first European contacts were made mostly by Portuguese and Spanish missionaries and adventurers who arrived in Cambodia after the mid 1500's. Buddhist opposition caused the missionaries' departure. When the Siamese pressed toward Longvek during 1590's, the King requested help from the Spaniards who arrived too late.

In 1599, a major incident involving the Spaniards and the Malays erupted in Phnom Penh. Dutch traders, established in

Vietnam, struggled for control of Cambodia until the establishment of the French Protectorate.

THE FRENCH ERA

French control over Cambodia was an adjunct to French colonial involvement in Vietnam. King Ang Duong had sought in vain to obtain French assistance to regain former Cambodian lands held by Vietnamese. Only when they feared British and Thai control over the Mekong River, did the French push King Norodom into signing a protectorate treaty giving the French control over Cambodia's foreign affairs.

In the early years of the French protectorate, the European latecomers interfered little in the affairs of Cambodia. In the dispute with his half-brothers, Norodom gained rather than lost as the result of the French presence. Yet he had to resent the French recognition of Thai control over Battambang and Siemreap provinces. By 1870, French officials pressed for more control over internal affairs and sought to introduce reforms. Prince Sisowath, one of Norodom's half brothers, was ready to cooperate with the French who wanted to replace Norodom on the throne. Under French pressure, Norodom signed a colony treaty which resulted in a Cambodian uprising that lasted for two years. In 1891, the French representative in Phnom Penh assumed the leadership of the Cambodian Cabinet of Ministers and the King's role in government was reduced to a minimum. Norodom died a bitter man in 1904. Sisowath succeeded to the throne and reigned until 1927. There were no difficulties between the King and the French. With the preservation of the monarchy, the French administration successfully prevented the development of alternatives for national identification. One significant event occurring during Sisowath's reign was a protest by the rural masses against taxation and forced labor. The first important economic development by the French was the cultivation of rubber on the eastern plateaus.

Monivong, Sisowath's son, succeeded his father and reigned from 1927 to 1941. When he died in 1941, Japan was already established in Indochina. In the same year, the French governor placed Prince Norodom Sihanouk on the throne under difficult circumstances. The impact of the Japanese occupation on Cambodia was much smaller than in many other countries in Southeast Asia.

Following the end of World War II, Sihanouk favored cooperation with the French, and Cambodia became an autonomous state within the French Union.

CAMBODIA AFTER WORLD WAR II

After 1945, Cambodia was torn by factional disputes. Between 1946 and 1953, the dominant Democratic Party, led by Prince Yutivong and Eav Keus, was frequently at odds with King Norodom Sihanouk. In this atmosphere of internal discord and with France showing little interest in giving more power to Cambodia, Sihanouk decided to act. Early in 1953, he dissolved the Parliament and declared martial law. He conducted a vehement anti-French campaign around the world, and proclaimed independence from France on November 9, 1953.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 recognized Cambodia's neutrality, ordered the withdrawal of the Communist Viet Minh troops to Vietnam, and committed the country to elections in which everyone might vote. Sihanouk refused to associate himself with the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

In 1955, Sihanouk, fearing his power as a monarch would be reduced after an election, abdicated and put his own father, Suramarit, to the throne. He formed the *Sangkum* movement and assumed power as head of government. Urban intellectuals increasingly opposed him while his followers accorded him near God-King status.

Sihanouk accepted U.S. military aid in 1956. A U.S. Government study stated that they wanted him to maintain Cambodia's independence and reverse the drift towards pro-communist neutrality. Meanwhile, he accepted aid from Red China and repeated his denunciation of SEATO, further annoying the U.S. In 1959, Sihanouk claimed CIA involvement in a provincial right-wing plot to overthrow him.

Suspecting that his officers were becoming too dependent on American generosity, Sihanouk renounced U.S. economic and military aid and forced the closure of the U.S. aid missions during 1963. Sihanouk continued to play off Chinese, Soviet and American interests. In the countryside, he brutally suppressed tiny groups of the Khmer Rouge.

Sihanouk broke off diplomatic ties with the U.S. in 1965, and allowed North Vietnamese Communists to establish sanctuaries inside the borders of Cambodia. In the following year, Sihanouk allowed Communist supplies to be routed through the Cambodian port of Kompong Som to the eastern border areas with Vietnam. This traffic lasted until 1970.

Escalation of the war in Vietnam worried Sihanouk. He feared that his rundown Armed Forces would be unable to cope with any spillover of the hostilities into Cambodia.

In June 1969, Sihanouk announced restoration of rela-

tions with Washington. His playing off of left against right was becoming more precarious and his continued tolerance of the Vietnamese Communists along his borders was gaining increasingly hostile opposition from within his own government, the urban elite and the military. Prime Minister Lon Nol claimed that as many as 40,000 Vietnamese Communists were on Cambodian soil. B-52 bombings against suspected Communist bases along Cambodia's borders had pushed the Vietnamese Communists further into Cambodia.

Sihanouk left for a holiday and physical check-up in France in January 1970. In his absence, Lon Nol closed the port of Kompong Som, stirred up public anger against Vietnamese Communist infiltration of Cambodia and staged anti-Vietcong demonstrations. On March 11, 1970, a mass demonstration in Phnom Penh attacked the North Vietnamese Embassy and other Vietcong offices. Lon Nol apologized but gave the North Vietnamese seventy-two hours to quit Cambodia.

On March 18, 1970, Lon Nol, backed by Sirik Matak and supported by a vote of no-confidence against Sihanouk from the Parliament, staged a *coup d'etat* and gained an immediate recognition by the U.S. as head of the new government. In October 1970, Lon Nol abolished the monarchy and established the Khmer Republic.

Within five days, Sihanouk announced the formation of the National United Front of Kampuchea and sought the support of his old enemy, the Khmer Rouge.

By May, twelve thousand U.S. and six thousand South Vietnamese troops had attacked the Vietnamese Communists stationed in Cambodia.

From Peking, Sihanouk announced the formation of the Royal National Union Government of Kampuchea, which was immediately recognized by Peking and Hanoi. He declared himself Chief of State of Government in exile. A day later, Communist China, North Vietnam and North Korea broke off diplomatic ties with Cambodia.

Cambodia was involved in a full scale war by June of 1970. The Communists isolated Phnom Penh, won half of the country and took over twenty percent of the population. Fleeing the Communists and the bombing, hundreds of thousands of refugees swelled the population of Phnom Penh.

On February 13, 1971, Lon Nol flew out of the country to Hawaii as he suffered from a stroke. On his return a month later, it was felt that he was in no mental or physical condition to stay in office. On April 21, 1971, Lon Nol resigned. It proved impossible to form another government, so a few days later he

was back and remained in power for another four years.

Lon Nol's troop controlled only an area around Phnom Penh containing a handful of towns, a large area around the province of Battambang and a strip of territory between the two by the summer of 1971. Supplies were flown in to Phnom Penh and thousands of refugees swelled its population daily. The North Vietnamese Army was well entrenched; it established supply routes from South Vietnam and helped train Khmer Rouge troops in Northeastern Cambodia.

On October 20, 1971, Lon Nol declared a state of emergency. Members of his Cabinet begged him to relinquish some of his powers. There were rumors of coups and fears that the Communists were about to arrive.

The Cambodian government estimated that two million of the country's seven million population had been displaced and that twenty percent of property had been destroyed by the end of 1971. A million and a half refugees inhabited Phnom Penh.

By the beginning of 1973, in Paris, North and South Vietnam signed an agreement on ending the war and restoring peace. The Khmer Rouge launched an assault on Kompong Cham.

Inflation ran at 250% per annum in 1974. Production continued to decline and exports were almost nil. Ninety-five percent of all income was from the U.S. aid, 80% of the country's pre-war paddy fields had been abandoned. The influx of the refugees into Phnom Penh had pushed the population up to two million, four times its original size; food was scarce and expensive, and there were frequent power cuts. The provincial cities and towns were also full of refugee camps and new arrivals told of Khmer Rouge brutality in the countryside.

In April, 1974, the last U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, John Dean, arrived in Phnom Penh with instructions to bolster up Lon Nol's rapidly waning military position and explore the possibilities for talks with the enemy. In July, he managed to persuade Lon Nol to offer unconditional negotiations to the Communists. A strong promise was heard all over Phnom Penh and other cities that the U.S. would not, in any case, abandon the Khmer Republic. In Peking, this was denounced by Sihanouk who stated that he would never negotiate with the puppets.

The Khmer Rouge annual dry season offensive opened with rocket and artillery attacks at points surrounding Phnom Penh on January 1, 1975.

On April 1, 1975, Lon Nol left Cambodia forever. In the afternoon, the government's last defenses on the Mekong River fell and the Khmer Rouge, backed by Vietnamese Communists,

took Neak Luong in bloody hand-to-hand fighting. This was followed by the evacuation by helicopters of U.S. Embassy staff and dependents which began eleven days later.

KHMER ROUGE ERA

The Khmer Rouge marched into Phnom Penh, April 17, 1975. They immediately started clearing the city of its inhabitants. The entire city was emptied of its people. Two and a half million people were on the move. They were told that the Americans were about to bomb the city so that they had to abandon their homes, taking just as much food as they could carry with them.

The Communist Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia, or Democratic Kampuchea, as it was officially titled, from April, 1975, to January, 1979, inspired by the agrarian Communism of Mao Tse-tung. The country became a vast work camp where communal life took over from family life. Names such as *mother* and *father* were changed into *comrade*. According to their ideology, an old society should be completely destroyed, and a new one can be created. Buddhism was the first to be abolished. All important priests were killed and the rest were forced to disrobe and marry. Teachers, doctors, actors, scientists, civil servants, military and students were killed for being enemies of the rural peasant revolution. Wives and husbands lived apart. Children were often used as spies for the Khmer Rouge government. The communization of all aspects of social life was governed by illiterate persons authorized by *Angka Loeu*, the Supreme organization of the Khmer Rouge. Indeed, these policies had already been tried out in the liberated zones of Cambodia long before the war against the Khmer Republic was completed. As the result of this policy, at least three million Cambodians were killed during the Khmer Rouge era.

In September, 1975, Sihanouk returned home from Peking and was elected Head of State. This was in name only and he was kept very much to his home. In February, 1976, Chou En Lai died and Sihanouk disappeared temporarily from public life. Khieu Samphan replaced him as Head of State.

In September, 1977, Pol Pot (formerly Salot Sar) emerged as Prime Minister. He openly aligned with China and described his government as Marxist-Leninist. Border and territorial disputes between Kampuchea and Vietnam had been worsening. The Kampuchean government feared that Vietnam intended to incorporate a socialist Kampuchea into a Vietnamese-dominated Indochina Federation. At the end of 1977, the Khmer

Rouge denounced Hanoi publicly.

In January, 1978, the Vietnamese Communist government launched a massive invasion into Cambodia. Many Khmer Rouge officials fled to Thailand. Towards the end of the year, the Vietnamese Communist troops launched a new invasion of northeast Cambodia. China backed Pol Pot. The Chinese, aware of the world's outrage at the Khmer Rouge brutalities, persuaded Pol Pot to embrace Sihanouk once again to create a more broad-based front.

When Phnom Penh fell into the Vietnamese Communists' hands on January 7th, 1979, the Khmer Rouge leaders retreated to the jungle. The Vietnamese Communists installed a regime trained and chosen by Hanoi. Cambodia became the People's Republic of Kampuchea. One group of the leaders was Hanoi-trained, and the other consisted of former Khmer Rouge functionaries who defected to Vietnam in 1977-1978 when Pol Pot turned his revolutionary terrorism against members of his own party.

Three separate resistance movements are fighting the Vietnamese occupation today. They form a tripartite Coalition Government. This government consists of the Khmer Rouge and two non-Communist groups. It has been recognized by the United Nations as the sole legitimate representative of that country in the world body. But the coalition exists largely for purposes of international diplomacy. Each of the three groups operates quite autonomously in its political and military activities inside Cambodia.

The powerful component of the resistance is the Khmer Rouge faction which is well supplied by China. But the Khmer Rouge has two problems in its struggle. The first one is that Chinese weapons, though plentiful, are technologically inadequate to destroy Vietnamese tanks and artilleries in a great number. The second problem the Khmer Rouge faces is its past political record. The Cambodian population fears a return to the terror, social dislocation and hard labor of the 1975-1978 period.

The second group within the resistance coalition is the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), a nationalist movement led by Son Sann who lived in France during the war of 1970-1975. He returned to the Thai border during the reign of the Khmer Rouge and from there entered Cambodia in 1979 to form the KPNLF in October of that year. The guerrilla leaders who are today Son Sann's field commanders are dedicated to the nationalist, anti-Communist cause. More than 140,000 Cambodians now live in KPNLF villages. The peasants, having fled both the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese Communists, provide the

volunteers for Son Sann's guerrilla army.

The third and smallest component of the resistance coalition is the organization of Sihanouk, the former pro-Communist prince, created in Pyongyang, North Korea in 1979 and set up in Western Cambodia in 1981.

Chapter III

THE KHMER CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL WORTH

The value system of the Cambodian originates from many different cultural traditions: Khmer, Indian and French, with the influence of at least two distinct religions– Brahmanism and Theravada Buddhism. Therefore, it is not a homogeneous, unicultural system. Difference segments of the population do not equally share the entire complex of values; some tend to be more influenced by certain elements than others.

INFLUENCES

A combination of the ancient Khmer culture with Indian Hinduism represents the source of one set of values which are oriented toward a system of classes and rank distinctions. A person has a definite place in the society with a definite role. There exists a formal pattern of respect and deference between people of superior and inferior rank.

Another set of values derives from Theravada Buddhism. Here the main concepts are the unity of all life and the ultimate spiritual perfectibility and equality of all mankind. Doctrines include religious detachment from worldly affairs, the individual's responsibility for his own status in life, and the possibility of changing status through a combination of merit and reincarnation. Merit can be achieved through service to community, pagoda, and nation and by adhering to various rules of personal conduct. The rules emphasize the avoidance of causing suffering, self-discipline and improvement, humility, passivity, temperance, non-accumulation of wealth, and harmonious relations with others.

A third set of values derives from the cultural tradition of the French middle class, which has influenced Khmer society through government and education. This tradition allows individuals to raise his life status by the practical means of education and economic advancement. It stresses the active aspects of achievement and the accumulation of material wealth as means of attaining personal and social objectives. It is influential among upper classes and Khmer civil servants who have been exposed to western education. However, it has not penetrated to rural areas.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The rules of etiquette between people of different status are carefully spelled out for every situation. The limits of behavior for a defined situation must be adhered to although most Cambodians would readily shift to a more informal kind of interchange. When unable to understand the nature of a situation or placed between two conflicting situations, Cambodians tend to withdraw completely.

A principal role of a leader in Cambodian society is to explain. The follower is expected to respond by exerting himself to understand clearly the nature of any new situation and his possible role in it. Therefore, he questions all he can to find out about all possibilities and implications explained to him. Cambodians are good in discovering hidden meanings in speeches and texts. They rarely negotiate and enter discussions with goals they do not want to change.

Persistent disagreements come from the fact that each of the concerned parties believes that the other does not understand the situation. Resolution can come through explanation to all parties so as to obtain a common solution. When this turns out to be impossible, both sides react by withdrawing and the matter is left unresolved. Only time and circumstances can correct the situation. Intermediaries are sometimes called in to give advice and clarification.

INDIVIDUAL INDEPENDENCE

Personal independence is given high value by Cambodians but it is not conceived in the same way Americans do. For a Cambodian, independence would mean freedom from obligation or commitment beyond his defined role of his status in a given situation.

Cambodians rarely confuse their formal roles in society with their informal personal roles. They do not inject personal overtones into formal situations.

However, there is high tolerance for variations in personal behavior, subject only to the admonitions of the religious code of personal conduct. Public and private roles are judged on different bases. While Americans would feel that a public official should lead an irreproachable private life, this is not the case for Cambodians. A Cambodian official may be censured for failing to observe the required behavior regarding a private life situation but not for disgracing a certain public office he holds.

PERSONAL CONDUCT

Cambodians believe that individuals should adhere to the Buddhist code of personal conduct. Proper standards of sexual behavior and/or premarital chastity and marital fidelity are given high value. Nonviolence is also an important value. The crime rate is quite low in the country. Temperance, diligence, thrift, and self-discipline are stressed. Children are taught not to lie as it is against Buddhist precepts. However, "social lying" may be considered as something else.

The more one can shape one's conduct along these ethical lines, the greater will be one's achievement of religious merit and the better one's next life will be. The individual's good conduct and services to the community will be approved by his neighbors and he will gain more respect from his fellows. In recognition he may be awarded a higher position within the religious, governmental or community organization.

Cambodians have felt little compulsion to succeed in a material sense. Acquisitiveness is not a dominant characteristic; adequacy is the objective in life.

Recently, however, some Cambodians have tended to reexamine their systems of values according to the modern way of thinking. While wealth would have more place in the new value system, it had never before been considered a way to accede to merit or economic or political power.

National interest remains to be an important part of the Cambodian scale of values.

Chapter IV

THE FAMILY

GENERAL CONCEPT

The family is the basic social unit of Cambodian society. Rural communities often develop out of clusters of households with close relationship. The rural family is also the basic unit of production and consumption and generally acts, and is treated, as a unit for labor exchange or contribution to the community. A typical Khmer family consists of a married couple and their unmarried children, often parents and grandparents also live in the family. It is rather normal to see three or four generations living together in one home.

Within the family, the wife deals with all household matters. The husband deals with the outside world. The elderly parents are supported by married or unmarried children until they pass away. Relationships between parents and children are precisely defined by traditions and law. Based on Buddhist precepts, tradition places great emphasis on respect for those of senior age or generation. Deriving from tradition, law affirms the mutual obligations of parents and children for maintenance and support. The legal aspect of these relationships is included in the Cambodian Civil Code covering marriage, divorce, rights of wives, plurality of wives, adoption, guardianship, parental authority, inheritance, etcetera.

Strengthened by religious precept, long tradition and national law, the Cambodian family is a relatively conservative and stable institution. Ties between parents and children are the strongest and most durable of all social connections.

Due to financial reasons, it is not always possible for a newly married couple to establish immediately their own separate residence. In such cases, the couple lives temporarily with parents of either husband or wife. Normally, a married child remains in the household to care for older parents, and the house will belong to the young couple when the parents pass away.

Having no children is a misfortune to the Cambodians, and a large family is considered a good thing. The birth of a baby, boy or girl, is always a happy event. Children may be legally adopted or informally adopted for some periods of time. In practice, informally adopted children usually have the same rights and

duties as natural children. However, in cases of controversy over inheritance their legal position is weaker. Children trace descent equally through the father's and mother's lines. Usually, there is no difference in the relationship with relatives on either side of the family. Ties between generations or between related households are loose and informal. A couple is expected to give material or financial aid to needy parents and to brothers or sisters of either spouse. More remote relatives are also aided but to a lesser extent. Sons and daughters may inherit equally from their parents. However, parents may decide to give a larger share to the offspring who has taken special care of them. The parents' will on dividing of property can be a written or an oral one. A wife may continue to own her inherited property and may use it as she sees fit.

Upon marriage, a woman takes her husband's first and last names. She may still be called by her own first name (example: husband's name: *Keo* Sam Kol, wife's maiden name: *Meas* Rumduol → wife's married name: Mrs. *Keo* Sam Kol. Official documents would list her as "Mrs. Keo Sam Kol born Meas Rumduol". Informally, she would mostly be called *Mrs. Sam Kol* but also may be called *Mrs. Rumduol*). Please note also that names are written in this order: last name, first part of first name then second part of first name. The middle part of the whole name cannot be treated as middle name as in the western style.

ROLES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

The husband is responsible for housing and feeding all members of the family. In rural families, he does the principal work of preparing the soil, seeding, cultivating and harvesting the crops. In urban areas, a different pattern prevails but the major responsibility of family support is still borne by the husband.

The wife plays a key role within the family in many respects since the prosperity, well-being, and reputation of the household depend a lot on her. She is responsible for the training of children, especially the female ones whose good conduct will bring prestige to the family. She is most often the budget keeper of the household.

Relatives by marriage are generally regarded as close as blood relatives. There is much visiting back and forth among kinsfolk. In case of need, money is borrowed, generally without interest, from a relative rather than a non-relative.

Relationships within the greater family are regarded as the ideal model for all friendly social relations.

CHILDBIRTH AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In rural areas, an expectant mother prefers to have a midwife deliver the baby at home. She stays home for at least seven days after delivery. Babies are treated with affection by everyone and spend most hours sitting on one's lap or straddling one's hip. Children in the country side are breast-fed up to two years of age or even more. Until age three or four, the child receives much attention while only few demands are made on him. Afterward, the child receives less attention and has to feed and bathe himself. At five, he begins associating more with other children. A girl of this age may be given more responsibility in caring for younger siblings, light house-work or even some cooking. At six or seven, children of both sexes go to school. Parents place high value on their children's receiving some education. Very low rates of absenteeism may be attributed to this. Most children's games stress skill rather than intelligence and very few games involve competing teams.

After the infant stage, the child is expected to conform to norms of politeness and obedience. The father takes up his authoritarian role *vis-a-vis* the children. A girl of ten can perform most household duties such as cooking a meal, sewing, washing clothes, and caring for younger ones. A boy of this age learns how to tend draft animals and knows the basic techniques of agriculture. Brothers and sisters never touch or kiss each other. Children are not free to do what they want. Girls are under stricter supervision, and sex segregation is the common social rule. A girl, after reaching the age of puberty, must observe a period of one month's seclusion called "the shadow month" sometime before her marriage. During this period she is to stay inside the home at all time and eats a vegetarian diet. The relationships among siblings are based on age. Children are taught to use the respectful forms of language by referring to their older brothers and sisters as "big brother" and "big sister". The reputation of a family depends to a great extent upon the behavior of children in and outside their family.

Around the age of ten, a boy may take up his monkhood and stay in the pagoda for some time to "wash out" his sins and to show obedience to his parents. During his service time as novice monk, he learns the holy scripture written in Pali and the good code of conduct according to Buddhist teaching.

Khmer children most often play with those of their own age and sex but mixed groups sometimes play together. However,

sex segregation in adolescence is the rule. In rural areas, adolescent girls do not go anywhere unless escorted by an adult or a child. Virginity of brides is highly valued and premarital sex deeply deplored. Sex before marriage is a great shame for the girl and her family. By whatever means necessary parents prevent children to gain knowledge about sex for they feel that such knowledge would lead to desire and trouble.

Most men marry between the age of nineteen and twenty-four; and most girls marry between sixteen and twenty-two. Although young people in the same community see each other occasionally and have chances to become acquainted, there exits no such thing as "dating". Youngsters, most often, have little choice in the selection of their marriage partner. It remains a general rule, especially in the rural areas, that parents select a spouse for their son and daughter as they believe that this is within their domain of responsibility. On the contrary, parents and children in urban families tend to accept more and more present practices of western societies.

Chapter V

THE LANGUAGE SYSTEM

Khmer, also known as *Cambodian*, is the official language of Cambodia. It is the mother tongue of the Khmer race which comprises approximately 85 percent of the country's population. Khmer is the major language of the Mon-Khmer family, which includes the Mon language spoken in lower Burma, and hundreds of hill tribe languages and dialects spoken by people scattered over mainland Southeast Asia.

Owing to extensive historical ties to Indian culture, the Khmer language has many loan words and derivatives from Sanskrit. With the coming of Theravada Buddhism in the thirteenth century, Pali, the sacred Theravadin language, was borrowed in the same manner. The Pali and Sanskrit heritage is shared with the Thai and Lao. Since the French colonial time, French has become part of the colloquial language of urban people. To a much lesser extent, Khmer has words borrowed from Thai, Chinese and Vietnamese.

There are dialects of Khmer differing from one another mostly in pronunciation which may vary as widely as dialects of American English. A particular Khmer pronunciation depends on the part of Cambodia from which it comes.

There exists, however, the principal standard Khmer which is taught in schools and used in official circles and in national radio broadcasts.

THE KHMER LANGUAGE AND ITS WRITING

In contrast with Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai, the Khmer language is non-tonal. This means that variations in pitch are not part of the basic sound structure of words. Khmer has a monotone but staccato quality, with a rising inflection at the end of each sentence.

Words are mostly short, usually one syllable, sometimes two. Longer words are mostly loan-words from Sanskrit and Pali.

The Khmer alphabet originated in Southern India around the sixth century and was introduced into Cambodia along with other Indian cultural elements. There are 33 consonant symbols, 21 dependent vowel symbols and 12 independent vowel symbols.

Efforts were made to romanize the Khmer writing

system by the French administration. No uniform system was agreed upon and resistance came mostly from religious circles. The clergy felt that romanization would eliminate the traditional sacred teaching.

As there exist Khmer sounds with no equivalent in English and vice versa, an exact transliteration would be difficult if not impossible. This is also true for Khmer sounds against the French ones. Any romanization of written Khmer by Westerners could only be an approximation.

Two printing styles of Cambodian characters prevail: *chrieng* characters, meaning cuneiform or wedge-shaped, is the ordinary style used in regular textbooks, official documents, journals and normal writing; and *mul* characters, meaning cursive, which has roundish strokes was used in transcription of Pali text. Extended use of *mul* characters is made to represent capital letters in a title or in italicized words in a *chrieng* text. The Khmer script has a decorative and artistic appeal. One can enjoy just looking at the orderly and well-drawn Khmer scripts.

USAGE– WORD FORMATION– SENTENCES

As in English, sympathy and sorrow are expressed by low grumbling sounds, and anger can be detected by increased tempo as well as raised voice. Witticisms and humorous formations are considered treasures in conversation. Generally considered to have a gentle temperament, the Khmer tends to have a sharp tongue. Any talent for improvisation or impromptu versification is greatly admired.

Cambodian lends itself to oratorical flourishes. Allegorical references occur profusely in conversation. However it is advised that non-natives avoid these allegorical complications since they may imply something obscure. Khmer can be called an ambiguous language as it contains numerous hidden meanings. Among themselves, the Cambodians respond to any linguistic cues in order to clarify the meaning.

It can be said Khmer has four sets of vocabulary: one used by people of equal footing, one used while speaking to the respected people such as elderly folks or superiors, one used when addressing monks and, one used when addressing members of the royal family. This reflects the richness of the language as well as the definite stratification of the Khmer society.

Khmer is unusual in that it has affixes which alter the meaning of the word or change it from one part of speech to another. Besides prefixes and suffixes, it also has infixes, which are affixes inserted into the middle of words. Here are some

examples of Khmer affixes:

prefix: [pdɔl] = 'facilitate', from [dɔl] = 'reach'
infix: [sɔm bɔt] = 'oath', from [sbɔt] = 'swear'
suffix: [ponmaan] = 'how much', from [pon] = 'equal'

Khmer has also additives or companion words which couple to plain words for better resonance, for emphatic purposes or to indicate the higher number of something. Example: [mnus] becomes [mnusmneə] ='people'. The symbol "ʃ" after a word shows that the word needs be repeated to give emphasis. This symbol is mostly used after adjectives.

The basic word order in Khmer sentences is *subject–verb–object* as it is for English. The preposition *to* as in "I go *to* school" does not exist; nor does the verb *be* as in "My house *is* big".

Khmer is one of those languages which does not express grammatical relationships by suffixes (e.g. English plural *-s*, past tense *–ed*, or progressive *-ing*). Function words are used to express these same things.

Chapter VI

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Traditionally, education in Cambodia was intended for learning the Cambodian language and writing and Buddhist doctrine. Before World War II, the educational goal of the French administration was to train a group of civil employees. After 1954, the Cambodian government's aim was to train enough staff for the administration as well as for the industrial and business sectors. One official objective was the complete alphabetization of Cambodian.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Before 1975, education in Cambodia was highly centralized and financed by the national budget. The Ministry of Education assumed full control and supervision over all aspects of the educational system: establishing education policy, rules and regulations, building schools, hiring and paying teachers, inspecting schools, producing educational materials, setting up a uniform curriculum for the whole country, providing for school expenditures, organizing examinations, etcetera.

As stated in the Constitution, elementary education was compulsory. All public primary schools were open to the public without charge. Education at the primary level was also conducted in pagoda schools. Elementary classes were operating in practically every village inside Cambodia. Statistics for 1970 showed more than 5,000 public primary schools with student enrollment close to one million for a total population of around seven million. This is considered high participation for a developing country.

Elementary education consisted of six years of schooling. At the end of the first three years, the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* was awarded. At the end of the last three years, the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Complémentaires* was awarded. A large percentage of students dropped out after completing grade six and went back to field work as helping hands in rice-growing areas. Elementary curriculum put emphasis on academic study and included Cambodian ethics, civics, history, geography, arithmetic, science, hygiene, manual training and physical education. After national independence, French faded out as medium of instruction and became a foreign language taught in

the seventh grade onward.

Secondary education consisted of seven years of schooling, divided into a four-year cycle followed by a three-year cycle. Before the war broke out in 1970, there were about 150 government secondary schools with an enrollment of about 120,000 students. The drop-out rate between primary school and secondary school was high, since students were required to pass an entrance examination before they could enroll in public secondary school. A school offering the entire seven-year program of instruction is called a *lycée* while a school offering the first four years of the program is called a *collège*. Students who completed education in a *collège* could transfer to a *lycée*. At the end of the four-year cycle, students were required to take an examination. A first secondary diploma called *Diplôme d'Etudes du Premier Cycle* was given to successful candidates.

The second cycle of secondary education was also divided into two parts, the first part consisting of two years and the second of one year. Each part ended with a required state examination sanctioned by the *Baccalauréat I* and the *Baccalauréat II*.

The system of examination was very selective; the proportion of passing candidates was between ten and twenty percent for any one year. Students who failed at exams had to repeat the same class again or were put out of school if they had repeated once already. The French style examination lasted from several days to a week. Students who failed at the first session and who did not make very bad grades were allowed to go through a make-up session at the end of summer vacation. Vocational schools were designed to train high school children to become technicians. Several of these vocational schools located in Phnom Penh and a few were established in the provinces. Students took up such specialized fields as electricity, automobile mechanics, machine shop, carpentry, masonry, agriculture, animal husbandly, chemistry lab, nursing, elementary school teaching, etcetera. Higher technical training was also provided by universities.

Higher education was available in universities mostly clustered inside the capital city of Phnom Penh. Several other universities were located in big provincial towns. There was a high enrollment in scientific and technical studies, lower enrollment for letters and social sciences, and the lowest attendance for education and fine arts. Cambodian students could choose the following majors: letters, humanities, pure sciences, law, economics, medicine, pharmacy, business, teaching, agronomy, forestry, and veterinary medicine. Other institutions of higher

learning offered major courses in civil engineering, electrical engineering, architecture, fine arts, Buddhist studies, public administration, etcetera.

Private schools were mostly operated by minority groups—French, Chinese, Vietnamese—in order to make it possible for their children to study in their own native language. Control over these schools by the Ministry of Education was rather loose.

METHODS OF EDUCATION

From national independence until 1975, school enrollment had been booming at all levels of education. During the first year after independence the stress was on expanding primary education. It was later shifted to secondary schooling and, during the 1960's, toward higher education and technical education at secondary and university level. Cambodia has had an acute shortage of teachers, schools, and equipment. The national budget fell short of being able to cope with the rapid increase of student population. The shortage resulted in low standards. "Diploma teachers" amounted only to less than ten percent of the total. Moreover, teaching was not an attractive career. The pay was not good and the prestige of teachers was lower than that of other sectors of the government.

Traditional schools in Buddhist temples were primarily regarded as places for teaching Buddhist precepts. Later model schools were seen by the government as a place for guiding young people in the awareness of their civic duties.

Cambodian teaching methods rely on memorization rather than the development of intelligence and initiative. Typical classrooms in rural areas were small halls surrounded by wooden walls. Those in urban areas were more elaborate buildings having several stories built of bricks, concrete and tiles. Laboratories, libraries, textbooks, and audio-visual equipment were almost non-existent.

Classes were very crowded, holding from fifty to sixty students. All schools were co-educational with the exception of one high school for girls in Phnom Penh. However, boys and girls did not sit at a same table. Girls usually sat in the first rows. Relations between boys and girls were characterized by reserve and shyness.

Students were expected to show respect and obedience to their teachers. They never volunteered to answer questions but waited to be called upon by the teachers. Discipline was very strict. Students could be expelled temporarily or indefinitely for bad behavior.

Like every other institution, the entire school system was destroyed after the Khmer Communists took control of Cambodia in April 1975. There were no more classrooms, students, teachers or Education Department. Everything was considered "western contamination". Students in higher grades were condemned to die along with their teachers and other civil servants. Textbooks of all types were burned or dumped into the river. There was no schooling for over four years under the Khmer Rouge. After the invasion by the Vietnamese Communist forces and the establishment of the new regime in Phnom Penh in 1979, there were reports of schools reopening. It was, however, a minimum of school activities with many components lacking.

It is appropriate to point out that Cambodian refugee children who arrived after 1981 had been out of school for several years.

Chapter VII

RELIGION

The official religion of Cambodia was Theravada Buddhism, one of the two major forms of Buddhism. Over 80 percent of the total population adopted this religion. Theravada Buddhism was the state religion as mandated by the Constitution. It was an important source of national integration and the primary provider of the value system for the overwhelming majority of the population. Since the 13th century, Buddhism had been the predominant popular belief in Cambodia. Before that time, the religion practiced by the royal circle was the Brahmanic cult which included the worship of the god-king or *devar*. This cult, which flourished inside the court, did not have much effect on the mass who practiced animistic and ancestral cults. Such spirit cults have survived among Cambodians and do not compete nor conflict with Buddhism or Brahmanism.

Buddhism emphasizes the ultimate goal of *nirvana*, a state in which all desire and individual consciousness including suffering are abolished. In contrast to the monk, an ordinary man is thought to be quite remote from this goal. He can take satisfaction in having risen so far within the great hierarchy of living things and can hope for a better rebirth or reincarnation with more good doings in his present life. However, to deal with the spiritual difficulties of daily life, the Khmer Buddhist relies upon local and ancestral spirits. He will beg for relaxation of punitive actions on their parts in time of distress, or he will seek their approval for any new venture.

The provision in the national Constitution for freedom of religion was well implemented, and every ethnic group was allowed to worship as it desired. The Cham remained attached to Islam, the Chinese and Vietnamese adhered to Mahayana Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism or other sects such as Confucianism and Taoism.

THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF BUDDHISM

At the time when Hinduism, also called Brahmanism, was widespread in India, Prince Siddharta (563-483 B.C.) initiated Buddhism in that country. He rejected his royal status, his rights and his wealthy living to become a wandering ascetic. After years of meditation, according to Buddhist scriptures, he attained enlightenment while praying under a Bo tree. Spread-

ing all over India. Buddhism reached Sri Lanka in 246 B.C. after which time the *Tripitaka*, the sacred scripture of Theravada Buddhism, was committed to writing. It was originally written in Pali, an ancient Indian language derived from Sanskrit. The Cambodian translation of the basic religious text was the first one to be accomplished in its entirety in any other language.

Buddhism began as a reform of old Hindu doctrines. Both the Buddhist and the Hindu sees the universe and all living forms as parts of eternal, cyclical and recurrent process. For the Buddhist, the present life is merely a state or phase of an endless progression of events which does not cease with death. Life and death are merely alternate aspects of the existence of individuals. It is possible that an individual will have his next existence as a better or a worse being, or a god, or even a lower animal. The continuous cycle of rebirth involving all living things is called *sansara*. Theravada Buddhism does not require a belief in a god but insists upon the responsibility of each individual for his behavior.

Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism is based on three components: Buddha, the "eternal" guide; *dharma* or the teaching of Buddha, the way to right action and belief which center on *Karma*, the belief that the present life and thereafter depends on one's deeds and misdeed; and the *Sangha*, the clergy who carry on Buddhist teaching.

Not much of the Buddhist concepts was original to Buddha. The Brahmanic vision of *sansara* is the endless series of pain and sorrow in every life. The Buddhist addition to the concept, which can be considered as an elaboration, is the hope for heaven or a happy life after death. *Nirvana*, the most perfect stage a living form can attain, represents a complete release from *sansara*. One can gain this state of enlightenment, in which all illusions of existence are conquered, after achieving the best of *Karma* by earning most merits and avoiding all misdeeds.

The Buddhist concepts can be summarized as follows: suffering exists; it has a cause which is nothing besides the craving for existence; such craving can be stopped by following the Path. The Path, in simple terms, consists of right understanding, right purpose, right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right effort, right thinking and right meditation.

The *Karma* doctrine holds that one's actions in this life and in all previous ones determine what stage in the hierarchy of living creatures one will occupy in the next incarnation. One's *Karma* can be favorably affected by one's acts. The five precepts which all good Buddhists try to comply with at all times are: do not kill; do not steal, do not commit adultery; do not tell lies; and

do not take intoxicants or liquors. On saint days, four times a month, they may choose to take up three additional omissions: do not participate in any sense-exciting activity such as dancing or singing; do not use any personal adornment; do not eat after midday. Buddhist monks must strictly follow the ten basic precepts comprising the eight listed above and two more: do not rest on a luxurious bed (mattress is considered a luxury); do not handle money or other valuables. The ten basic precepts must be observed every day of the monkhood. There are up to two hundred twenty-seven rules of monastic discipline to be obeyed by a *phikhu*, a fully ordained monk, and only seventy-five for a novice monk.

THE *SANGHA* AND THE *WAT* (TEMPLE)

The Buddhist hierarchy in Cambodia is organized in accordance with the state regulations. There are two separate monastic orders: the *Mohanikay* order (the great congregation) and the *Thommayut* order (the doctrinal group). The *Mohanikay* is by far the oldest and the largest of the two orders with over ninety percent of the members of the *sangha* belonging to it.

Before the war broke out in 1970, there existed around 2,800 *wat* or monasteries with about 90,000 monks living in them at one time.

There appear to be no real doctrinal differences between *Thommayut* and *Mohanikay* orders. However, they disagree on certain details of behavior; for example, the *Thommayut* monks adhere more strictly to the rules.

Until recently, according to Buddhist tradition, each Cambodian male spent some time of his life as a member of the *sangha* to show obedience to his parents and to learn the good ways of life. The time thus spent may be as short as three months. The most popular time for Cambodians to enter the monkhood is the *Vossa*, the Buddhist retreat period which ends in October.

Members of the *sangha* had been outside the scope of civil legal actions and exempt from all public duties. They were not eligible to vote or hold official office. They were not affected by military draft and could not be tried without first being defrocked. The expulsion of a monk can be decided by the head of the local *wat*, with approval of the superior of the order.

The hierarchy of the *sangha* can be summarized in the following list:

- *Rachiakanak*, head of each of the two orders (*Mohanikay* and *Thommayut*)

– *Thananukrum*, one rank below the first, after 20 years of service.
– *Chau athika*, head of a temple or *wat*.
– *Kru saut*, two in each *wat*, assisting *Chau athika*.

Each *wat* has one or two lay assistants, called *achar*, who act as intermediary between the monks and laymen. The *achar* rarely lives in the *wat*. He represents the monks in contacts with the government, acts as master of ceremony at celebrations and leads the prayers. The *Chau athika* supervises the occupants of the temple, monks and students as well, and is responsible for the buildings and temple grounds and a smooth operation of the temple school.

A *wat* may be inhabited by as few as ten or twenty monks or as many as several hundreds. Typically, a *wat* consists of a cluster of buildings made mostly of wood and tiles or bamboo and thatch, which are usually built on stilts. These buildings serve as shelters for monks and a number of religious elderly folks. A walled enclosure surrounds the complex. The main entrance is from the east and is generally guarded by strange figures of animals or legendary characters. In the middle of the compound stands the most important structure called the *Vihear*, the temple proper, which is always a piece of architecture and art work. The *vihear*, a huge building in itself, contains a large statue of Buddha in meditating posture. One or two open halls or *sala* serve as place for public ceremonies for a neighboring population amounting to several hundreds. Most temples have a number of beautiful shrines containing the cremated remains of dead persons. There is generally an elementary school inside a *wat*.

Life in the *wat* is dominated by restrictions and prohibitions. A monk must follow the Buddhist precepts more strictly than do the layman. For example, a Buddhist monk can not get closer than several feet to a female. The rules of honesty and sobriety are more exacting for the *sangha* than for the laymen.

A *sangha* must have his head, eyebrows and beard shaved every two weeks. Each of his days is generally full and well ordered. He should be up around five o'clock every morning. After washing up, he practices his prayers in Pali and Cambodian. Around seven or eight he starts off, with or without a temple boy, to beg the daily food. This trip around the neighboring communities could last several hours. Other principal duties include studying the holy scriptures, and teaching other monks and children. Some monks may have to go out to officiate at village ceremonies: wedding, cremation, burial, moving to a new

home, a child's birthday, attendance to the sick and even family counseling. Shortly before noon he takes his last meal of the day; then comes a time for rest and contemplation. In the afternoon he can help take care of the ground inside the *wat*. On the whole, a monk spends a good part of his time learning and reciting the scriptures. Classroom learning would include mathematics, history, geography and sciences with much concentration on literature.

In recent years, adolescents and young men would rather pursue a secular education than take up the monkhood. Yet, in spite of some influence from the industrialized world, the *sangha* still occupies a unique position in the transmission of Khmer culture and values within the traditional and conservative society.

Chapter VIII

ART FORMS AND EXPRESSION

Cambodian art is undoubtedly one of the most prestigious in the whole of Southeast Asia. It is also one of the most systematically studied.

Derived from Indian culture for the most part, Khmer art progressed through phases that parallel the ones of Cambodian history. Peaks of artistic and intellectual achievement were reached during the early Funan period and during the later Angkor period. This latter one is represented by the great stone monuments of the Angkor region dating from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries.

The temples of Angkor are by no means the only remains of the great period. Angkor was the capitol of a vast empire which included most of present Laos and Thailand and part of Malaysia. Stone monuments, steles, temples and statuaries are witness to the spread of Cambodian civilization all over these areas. It is unfortunate that most of the literature of the old time was written on materials easily destroyed by tropical dampness and insects. However the quality of the lost part may still be judged from the inscriptions carved on old stones. Elements of ancient Khmer literature can be found in both poetry and prose. They include royal decisions, legal codes, records of battles, hymns dedicated to gods, etcetera.

Both the literary inscriptions and the architectural remains prove Cambodia's cultural debt to India. Nevertheless there are also signs of true native inspirations and Indian models were never slavishly copied. Nowhere in India can be find something comparable to the general simplicity and unity of Angkor Wat or Bayon art styles.

During the Thais' long conquest over Cambodia, they absorbed much of the Khmer culture. Tens of thousands of the best Cambodian scholars and artists were forced away by Thai raiders as slaves. At one time, they carried off the whole of population of Angkor, then capital of Cambodia. Khmer culture never recovered from the setback. Some contemporary Cambodian artists are inclined to look to Thai for guidance.

The artistic and intellectual life of present Cambodia is overshadowed by the greatness of the past. That glory seems to be lost and irretrievable. The grandiose spirit that built the wonderful stone temples of Angkor no longer exists. Ingenuity is no longer perpetuated in stones but limited to items designed

for tourists. These items of different forms endlessly repeat the ancient themes. To the educated layman, the state of the art appeared to be of little concern. Public matters, internal and international political problems drew much of their attention. However, there was some evidence of intellectual revival. Many youngsters showed a new sense of dedication, especially after World War II.

ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE

All ancient buildings are of religious inspiration. Among those known to us, none was erected before the start of the 7th century. Since that time, every religious center has been the tower temple covered with a number of terraces. The tower temples became more and more complex. Their composing elements were laid out after a geometrical plan. Many buildings might be on the same platform in a single or double row or in quincunxes; but most frequently they were built on the top of pyramids with terraces called "mountain-temples". This type of complex is linked to royal worship and represent a symbolism hard to understand. Phnom Bakheng is an example. They became even more sophisticated by the addition of halls and arcades extensively and advantageously utilized. The culmination of Khmer ancient architecture was attained at the construction of the great Angkor complex, terminated in the first part of the 12th century. Originally, the temples were built from bricks bonded together with high strength. From the end of the 10th century, sandstone, rarely replaced by laterite, started to replace bricks. Throughout the 11th century, sandstone became the only building material.

One of the most original features of Khmer art continues to be the face-towers as inspired by Buddhist cosmology. Bayon style is a typical example. After Bayon, not a mountain-temple was built on ground level. Even before Angkor was abandoned, traditional architecture was no longer followed. The work of Jayavarman VII, during whose reign the style of Bayon was created which was intended to express royal symbolism, could not be completed by his successors. With the rising of Theravada Buddhism another concept was introduced. Buddhist doctrine was emphasized but not the durability of the constructions. With the same building techniques, bricks and mortar replaced stone in buildings erected in the following centuries. Later on, composite construction ideally suited for monastic architecture came into use not just inside Cambodia but also in Thailand and Laos.

Architectural decorations played a major role in Khmer art. Its evolution through time has enabled scientists to date Khmer historic buildings with much accuracy. Sandstone or other materials were smartly carved into lintels, small decorated columns, pilasters and pediments exposing a wide range of foliated scrolls mixed with human figures and animals of various postures. From an early time to 13th century, access to the complexes was emphasized by paths, steps and terraces. Decoration of these structures was by lined carved stone blocks representing statues of guards or lions and by ornated corner posts. Sometimes multi-headed *nagas* or *garudas* terminated the beautiful balustrades.

The images of deities and guardians of temples in narrative low relief also show the development of Khmer sculptures. Most statues are made of sandstone; bronze images are rare, and wood-carving became popular only after the 13th century. Mostly made of stoneware, Cambodian ceramics generally have classical baluster shapes which coexist with those of animal shape or other more functional shapes.

Information about architecture and sculpture after the 13th century is generally lacking mostly because the use of stone was abandoned. The Thai occupation of Angkor and the forced removal of artists resulted in the impoverishment of Khmer arts. Post-Angkor architectural works have been represented by the royal palace in Phnom Penh and Buddhist temple structures spread over the whole country. Modern sculpture with chief subjects being Buddha, *naga* heads, *apsaras* and other motifs derived from ancient Cambodia are made in local marble.

MUSIC

One of the most common forms of art expression is singing improvised lyrics to traditional music. It is done at any pleasant time by any one: the little boy tending the water buffalo, children playing together, young men and women courting at field-work, old men conducting ox-cart, etcetera. The words may endlessly be improvised but the number of tunes is quite limited. Cambodians have no musical notation system of their own, and the western system was not really introduced until after World War II. Even today, traditional musicians do not use the modern notation. Most of the tunes and songs are carried orally from one generation to the next. Some of the songs have been transferred back and forth to and from Thailand or Laos.

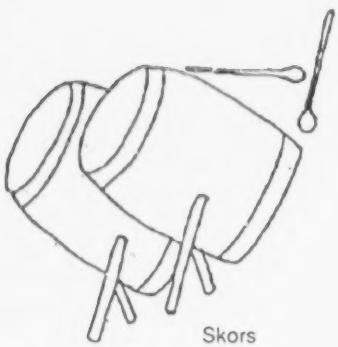
Playing some sort of musical instruments is a common form of popular amusement. Making and playing instruments

may be both considered traditional arts. The fact that Cambodians learn to play instruments with rapidity, even though without formal instruction, surprises many Westerners. Most instruments are decorated with elaborate inlay work. Music is likely to be present at every social and festive gathering. At one such gathering, a person present can improvise songs while others will accompany him on instruments if any are available. At least, rhythmic hand clapping by the group will give similar effect. Although western musical instruments have been introduced, native Khmer instruments are still highly popular. It is not uncommon to see both types of instruments in the same musical band. Among western imports, the banjo, mandolin, guitar and violin are quite popular. A typical Khmer orchestra, for example the one used to accompany the Royal Ballet, would consist of three xylophones, two *kongthom* (large circles of suspended copper gongs), several one-or two-stringed violins, several wind instruments made of bamboo or wood, and a series of long drums played with big sticks or fingers.

There seems to be music to accompany all celebrations and festivals. And there is a type of musical band for each occasion. The *Bassac* theater is accompanied by several saxophones, a trumpet, a trombone, a western drum set, a guitar and one or two Khmer instruments. A similar band is used in funeral processions in urban areas. Traditional orchestras are common at even the village level. These amateur bands are mostly composed of typical Cambodian instruments: several two-stringed violins, a flute, a small drum, a western banjo or mandolin and a guitar. Families or neighbors may perform impromptu private concerts after dinner. This type of concert always entertains the whole village population at wedding ceremonies in the country side, whereas western style bands entertain the ones in urban areas.

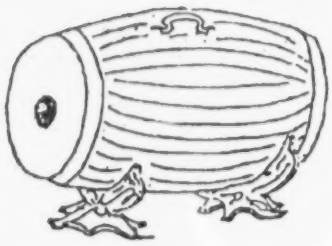
Cambodian music is often not appreciated by Westerners, and western music usually is unpleasant to Cambodians except for Latin American beats which are close to the Khmer folk rhythms. The Cambodian musical scale has five tones compared to seven in the western scale. Orchestral music has no harmony in the technical musical sense. The melodies are usually simple. The musicians do not use a score but follow the lead of one instrument played by the group leader. Each player can improvise as much as he chooses. The rhythm usually is a mere two-beat which is not so fast and not so slow.

PIN PEAD ORCHESTRA

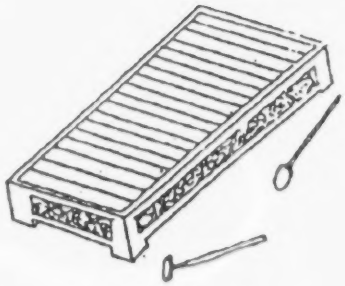


Skors

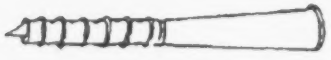
Chop Choeng



Sampo

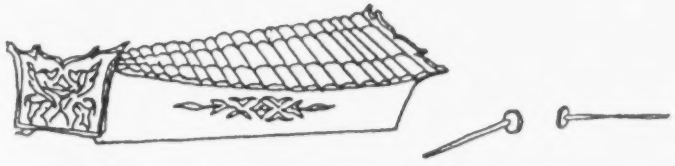


Raneat Dek (steel xylophone)

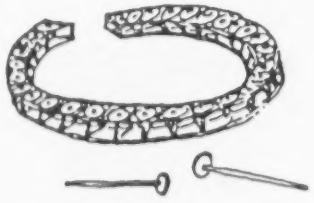


Sralai (flute)

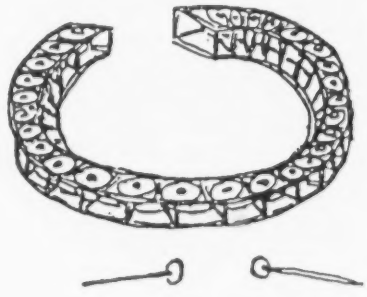
Raneat Ek (wooden xylophone)



Raneat Thung (bamboo xylophone)



Kong Tauch (small gongs)



Kong Thom (big gongs)

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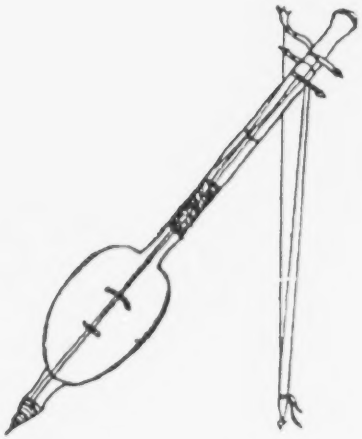
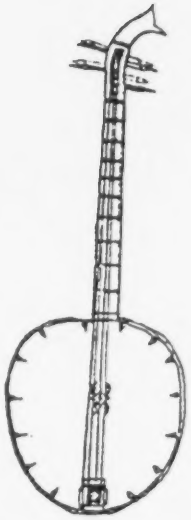
MARRIAGE ORCHESTRA



Tro Khmer (a three-stringed violin)



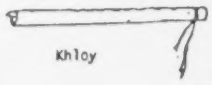
Chapei (guitar)

Skor Sampet

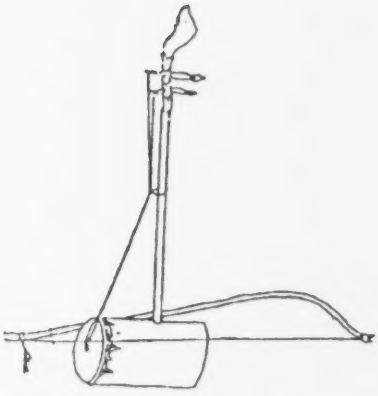
Skor Kar

Tro Ou

Khim



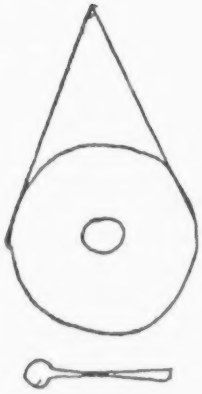
Khloy



Tro So

Sai Deav (a single-stringed gourd zither

CHAYAN BAND



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Chapter IX

LITERATURE
PERFORMING ARTS
CRAFTS

LITERATURE

Roots of Khmer literature can be traced further back in time than those of many other Southeast Asian countries. Although composed in Sanskrit, the script was transcribed in Khmer letters and dated back to the second or third century A.D. Most Khmer literature was written on materials highly vulnerable to damage by climate, insects and occupying enemy forces.

The literature and the script owe much to Indic sources. The most important masterpiece translated from Pali was the entire series of *Tripitaka*, the basic document of Theravada Buddhism. The document had never been translated in full from Pali into any other language. This achievement was made under the leadership of the late Buddhist patriarch Chuon Nath, who was directly involved for some forty years in the work. The extensive translation was bound into 110 volumes of up to 900 pages each.

Another remarkable work was the publication of the Cambodian version of the *Ramayana*, a great epic of Hindu literature. The effort was sponsored by the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh. Ancient writings, especially the Buddhist holy scripture, were produced, handled and studied by monks only.

Differences between spoken and written Cambodian prose are substantial; the literary forms use archaisms and words borrowed from Sanskrit and Pali. These words are not known to the common man. Works of technical nature are also published in Cambodian and deal with subjects such as divination, astronomy and traditional medicine.

Cambodian poetry uses meter, assonance, rhyme (terminal and internal) and alliteration. Poetry uses more archaic and foreign terms than prose.

French literature was an important syllabus in secondary schools. The willingness to abandon the monarchial form of government by the Khmer leadership can be attributed to the influence of French classical literature.

Novels of modern time, written in Cambodian or French

(French was also an official language) reflect influences from abroad; but they deal mostly with ancient Khmer legends, historical events, love stories, and current domestic social matters. Newspapers and magazines publish short stories and poems in both Cambodian and French. Cambodian writers have their works published by private booksellers. The latter pay rather low for the manuscript since paper and printing costs are high. Moreover, Cambodia is not a nation of readers.

The opportunity for young dedicated writers to obtain an audience of reasonable size is quite limited. Outside of journalism, there are almost no professional writers in the country.

PERFORMING ARTS

The numerous *Apsaras* in the bas-reliefs of the ancient temples of Angkor give good testimony to the delight that Khmer rulers took in the dancing female beauty. The dancers of Angkor royal courts have also provided inspiration for the Thai classical dance performed up to contemporary days.

In the old times, the court ballet performed only for the royal circle, their guests and occasional tourists gathered at Angkor. Since the 1950's, the royal group was also sent on tour to the big cities around the world. The troupe also danced on ceremonial occasions, both Buddhist and royal. On exceptionally dry farming seasons, it would dance at the palace to induce spirits to provide rain for the rice crop.

The University of Fine Arts was established to preserve and develop, among others, the Khmer Classical Ballet.

The classical dance was always accompanied by an orchestra composed of typical Khmer musical instruments (already listed under MUSIC). The ensemble could be doubled to provide greater sound effect. There might be some singing, either solo or in group, in the classical ballet. The royal dances, as a rule, were not viewed by the general public.

Dancers of the Ballet Royal wore beautiful, highly decorated costumes including head-dresses similar to those worn by *apsaras* of Angkor bas-reliefs. Beside the classical dance proper, the royal troupe also performed dramatic scenes drawn upon the Hindu myths, mainly the *Ramayana* and Buddhist *Jataka* tales. Dance gestures involve gracious hand-works and some body and foot movements.

Less professional from the artistic point of view, but more numerous (several dozens in number), were other dance-drama groups called Bassak theatrical groups. They were named after a Cambodian province from which they originated which is now

a part of South Vietnam. They also performed dance dramas representing episodes of the *Ramayana* and some Buddhist tales as well as the more popular indigenous legends, modern romances and satires. These groups showed influences from both India and China; and they performed only in the larger cities where large audiences helped keep the business alive. Performers were accorded very low pay and often had a side job.

The *yike*, a more rural and less elaborate dance drama form originating in Siemreap, showed a different style and setting. Such folkloric groups, generally maintained by amateurs performed for countryside audiences at local festivities. The accompanying musical group consisted of several large shallow drums and one or two two-stringed violins.

All three forms of dance drama were subject matters taught at the University of Fine Arts. Other subjects offered at this institution were folk dances, western ballet, acting, television show and movie making. Plays from Shakespeare, Molière and Corneille were highly praised by the educated few. Contemporary acting, movies and TV were relatively recent and showed limited success. The Fine Arts group frequently presented programs of music, dancing and plays on national television and radio.

Lively, rhythmic and colorful folk dances performed on stage by groups of skillful boys and girls were quite attractive for all types of audience. Among the most popular ones are the coconut dance, the fishing dance, and the *Krap* dance. The *Ramvong* (or circle dance) is a very popular one practiced by the majority of the rural population and is danced for a month or more as a part of the New Year celebration. Groups of mixed couples posture gracefully with their hands while stepping flirtatiously near their partners without touching each other. The Ramvong, also called *Lamthon*, is primarily for non-professionals.

CRAFTS

Before and mostly during the nineteenth century, artistic luxury objects were provided to the numerous members of royalty and the wealthy classes by Khmer artisans employed for the purpose. Silver and gold work was of very high quality. Jewelry pieces and little boxes which held the ingredients for betel-chewing were the most remarkable art objects. After the turn of the century, the making of these art pieces was abandoned little by little, as betel-chewing became less popular among the wealthy classes who also turned to the west for luxury

items. Many professionals who had been engaged in craftmanship turned to agriculture for a living. A survey made toward the end of World War I showed that artisans numbered only over one hundred, and most no longer practiced their crafts.

The French administration undertook to save the crafts. It assembled craftsmen at the School of Fine Arts which was originally established for the revival and the preservation of Khmer crafts. They were employed as instructors to teach young craftsmen-trainees. The French took care not to interfere in the traditional apprenticeship system. A new generation of Khmer craftsmen was thus formed, but the result was rather uninspiring. Ancient themes were meticulously repeated and the target group was solely the tourists. Cambodian clientele was quite small since only a few could afford the products. Most craftsmen worked on copying standard items made by others and rarely added their own individual touches. The craftsmen generally enjoyed little social prestige.

The most practiced crafts included the working of silver and gold, the making of jewelry, the sculpture of ebony and other hard-woods, and stone carving. The objects became more and more functional: cigarette boxes, sugar and cream sets, make-up sets, flower pots, trophies, silver wares, letter-opener, et-cetera. Designs were generally based on figures and floral patterns borrowed from the Angkor style. Local pottery making showed very little artistic design. Some other objects were mostly decorated; among these were musical instruments, oxcarts, the pirogues (racing canoes), rice-harvesting sickles, and so forth.

Among the folk arts, Cambodians took special pride in the making of silk items: the *hol*, the *phamuong*, the *sarong* and the scarf. Silk thread was produced by a kind of worm. Dying involved the use of native vegetable ingredients. Each piece of *hol* to be used for one Cambodian *sampot* was dyed and woven separately by hand so that no two garments were quite the same. Any one piece of those costumes would take several months to finish. The highly designed items were worn on special occasions only and were unaffordable for the poor majority.

Chapter X

IMPORTANT KHMER CEREMONIES

There exist many ceremonies celebrated by Cambodian families and communities. The two most remarkable ones continue to be the wedding ceremony and the funeral.

A. WEDDING CEREMONY

Preparations may take place several days before the actual wedding day(s). A wooden or steel frame is put in place on the front yard or on the street to support a canopy to serve as protection against the sun and rain. The whole setting is decorated with bright colors, lighting, palm leaves, etcetera.

On the morning of the first day comes the wedding procession. Dozens of participants carry trays of gifts from the bridegroom to the bride's family: jars and boxes of cookies and candies, fresh and canned fruits of all sorts, clothings, jewelry, meats, etcetera, carefully wrapped in bright colored cellophane.

Around nine o'clock in the morning, after the procession arrives at the bride's house, the ritual presentation of gifts begins. The interested parties, including the bride and bridegroom, are introduced to guests. There is an exchange of jewelry, not necessarily rings. A traditional musical band plays on while breakfast is served to guests along with the cookies and fruits just brought in.

The whole wedding ceremony is a series of ritual ceremonies namely *Kat saak, saut mon, ptim* with *bangvil popil, louk kantel, toang sbay, bok leak, psam damnek*. Many of these rituals are of Hinduist influence whereas others are of Buddhist influence. *Bok leak* and *kat saak* are meant to rid the young couple of shortcomings and bad luck and to give them blessings for a happy life. At *kat saak* ('to have a hair cut'), the bride and bridegroom dressed in their best traditional attire, much like the ones worn by Kings and Queens, sit in front of a decorated table. Respected couples, oftentimes relatives of either family, are invited to give the young couple a symbolic dash of hair cutting and combing to be followed by some perfume. All this is accompanied by the traditional music group's playing the "hair-cut" song. The symbolism is quite clear; long and undesirable hair is cut away so as to give the couple a new and clean hairdo; unfortunate things are thus removed by cleansing their minds

so they can live a happy married life.

Saut mon, or prayer chanting, is nothing more than a religious ceremony. Five Buddhist monks are invited in to give the blessing. The bride, still dressed in gorgeous gold brocade and golden jewelry, appears once more from her room. The *achar*, the layman priest, acting as master of ceremony for the whole wedding, guides the audience in Buddhist chanting. The monks answer by reciting prayers at some length. All is designed to wash away the bad luck and to prepare the new episode for the new couple.

At sunset all the dining tables are ready to receive guests. Several hundred guests are invited for the banquet. The bride and bridegroom stand at the gate to greet the arriving guests who will be seated by groups of ten. A full course of dinner is then served item by item. Families and guests may go to a big restaurant for the banquet. However, cooks may be hired for the day to prepare the big dinner for everybody at the bride's house. A temporary outdoor kitchen is set up in the yard nearby to help them make the good food.

The banquet is entertained by an amateur western-type musical band playing old and new tunes with Cambodian or Latin beats. After about an hour of eating and drinking, the young couple, accompanied by well-dressed friends, goes around the tables to offer and light cigarettes for guests. This would be a last presentation of the bride and bridegroom to the invitees; at the same time they receive blessings from friends and relatives. Wedding gifts are mainly in the form of money so as to help cover the overall cost of the big feast. There will be music and dancing until dusk.

At three or four o'clock in the morning of the next day comes the *ptim* meaning sit down in pairs to pray. The *achar* asks that all divinities and all departed ancestors of the two families come and give blessings to the couple. For each appearance, the new couple dresses differently and always beautifully.

Honeymooning is celebrated there at the bride's house with more rites during the evening of the second day.

Any wedding ceremony in Cambodia is a time and energy consuming venture which costs a lot of money. It should be the most significant and joyful moment of anyone's life.

DEATH AND FUNERALS

Days or hours before a person passes away, his room is redecorated so as to be surrounded by white curtains and religious paintings normally representing Buddha. Just before

the final moment, an *achar* or priest is invited to assist the process. The last three words a dying person should utter, whenever possible, are "*Buddha, Dharma, Sangha*" meaning "Buddha, His Teaching and the Clergy". By doing so the soul would be saved from the inferno.

Before the body becomes stiff, family members give the dead person a bath, new clothes and insert a coin in his mouth. This is intended for those left behind. It spells out the fact that at death none of the fortune can be brought along, not even a penny. The head of the dead is directed toward the West. During the funeral procession the body is carried feet first. It must be carried horizontally at all times. The trip to the cremation place may be several miles long; it is done on foot or in cars. When the departed is a respected person, the funeral includes several hundred mourners and several musical bands.

The ceremony itself can last from one to seven days, depending on the wealth of the family, because guests from afar are fed three meals a day. The lighting of the crematory furnace is done by a member of the family. However, tradition is also shifting toward giving this honor to a respected person of the community.

After cremation, family members gather the remaining ashes to be washed in coconut juice and kept in an urn to be placed in a stupa at a pagoda. The family goes to the stupa to worship the dead at least once a year. The oldest son or daughter generally leads in the worshiping.

A remembrance ceremony is celebrated by the family at the seventh day after a person is dead, at the hundredth day, and every one year period.

Families with Chinese influence have their dead buried rather than cremated. There is one day of the year on which families go to the tomb to celebrate for the dead. There is a food offering and praying next to the tomb. Members of the family wish that the dead be happy and that he takes care of the living persons.

Chapter XI

KHMER HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Holidays of all sorts were treasured. The people have an acute sense of the dramatic, and their celebrations abounded with costumes, light, floats and parades. Singing is very popular, music and dancing are enjoyed, and fireworks remain a feature of every festival. Festive occasions are closely related to the Buddhist religion and the temple itself was often the scene of feasts and theatrical performances.

There is one festival in which the vast majority of Cambodians takes part: the New Year. According to Cambodian tradition, April is the first month of the year. The ritual New Year lasts for three days, normally from 13th through 15th of April. The actual date and time (up to the minute) are determined by an astrologer who calculates the exact moment when the new *Thevada* arrives to replace the out-going one. The *Thevada* has the responsibility of looking after the well being of mankind. While getting ready to welcome the new deity, most people spent their time in cleaning and decorating their home so as to ban evil spirits and disaster. Small altars holding a pot of flowers, some candle-sticks, and incenses dedicated to the New Thevada are placed in front of each house. Cambodians in the United States continue to celebrate the New Year but are not able to celebrate it exactly as they did in Cambodia. The next paragraphs describe the New Year as it was celebrated in Cambodia.

The first day of the New Year is called *Sangkran* Day. Several minutes before the Thevada "came down", candles and incenses were lit up and family members come to the altar and made their wishes.

In the second day called *Vannabad* Day, people built small sand mounds inside the pagoda and prayed for prosperity and happiness as numerous as the sand particles.

The third day is called *Laeung Sak* Day. On this day people, old and young, gathered at the temple to wash the statues of Buddha. They also bathed their parents and grand-parents to show gratitude to them. In doing so, they would gain more merits for themselves. On this day also, civil servants of higher ranks, wearing their best national dress, went to the Royal Palace to pay respects to the King of Cambodia. In return, the dedicated government employees were promoted; this is the meaning of *Laeung Sak*.

In the country side, folks played and danced for up

to one full month. The traditional and popular games and dances during the New Year Celebration included *Ramvong*, folk theater and *Yike* in the open air, *Chol Chhoung*, *Bah Angkonh*, *Teanh Proat*, *Trot*, *Bach Tuc*, modern type parties and dancing, etcetera.

The New Year is the time to pray and to plan for a better new life during the upcoming year. It was also a time to pay visits to relatives and friends; the people could since work was at its lowest as rice harvest was done and schools were in summer recess.

There were three official Buddhist holidays. Two were of two days' duration but involved only a half-day's release from work each day. The first of the series, occurring in January or February, was *Meak Bochia*, wich commemorated the last sermon of the Buddha. The second was *Pisakh Bochia* in April or May; it was the triple anniversary of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and entry into *Nirvana*.

The remaining official Buddhist ceremony, held in September or October, was *Prachum Ben*, which lasted for three days. At this time, offerings were made to the monks for the benefit of the dead. In addition to these formally designated national religious holidays, there was the season of the *Kathen*, in October and November. During the season, each monastery received at least one *Kathen*. On the day set, villagers bearing gifts to the monks and the pagoda joined in a procession.

Secular holidays were determined by the Christian calendar and were full holidays for nationals as well as foreigners. For 1972, these holidays included Labor Day on May 1, National Day on October 9, United Nations Day on October 24, Independence Day on November 9, and Western New Year on January 1.

There were days of special occasion, such as the arrival of the President of a friendly or important nation, which were designated official holidays.

Among the most important festivals during the "sixties" which were presided over by the Chief of State were the Plowing of the Sacred Furrow, which occurred in May at the beginning of the rainy season, and the Water Festival, which celebrated the reversal of the current in the Tonle Sap River. The Water Festival occurred in October or November. Both of these festivals were eliminated after 1970.

Official holidays were numerous. Those based on lunar calendar varied somewhat from year to year in terms of Western calendar.

The Department of Labor and Social Action published lists of holidays applicable to workers in the private sector; the Council of Ministers published lists of holidays for government

offices. These official holidays were granted with full pay to civil servants and employees of private and mixed industries.

One of the most colorful festivals was the Chinese New Year. The celebration lasted for four days in the last of January or beginning of February, but preparations began weeks in advance. Most shops closed down for the occasion. Children were given all kinds of gifts, toys, and noisemakers such as firecrackers; they put on their new clothes and made every opportunity to have fun. The most exciting moments would be watching the "Dragon Dance". A large paper dragon was activated by several boys and followed by a group of drummers and musicians. The Dragon would dance in the front of each house which was willing to pay some fees. It was believed that good luck was thus brought in the house. Other parades march down the streets with altars of deities, magicians, colorful costumes, animals flowers, gongs, and drums; all chased out the demons of the past year and welcomed the good spirit of the new.

The happy and cheerful nature of the Cambodian people is well reflected in the way they celebrated their festivals and holidays.

Chapter XII

RECREATION AND LEISURE

Following are descriptions of some games played by Cambodian adults and children.

CHHUONG

Chhuong is played with a scarf rolled up to make a ball. The scarf ball is tossed back and forth between two teams– the girls' team and boys' team. Losers are to sing a song or to give the winners a piggy-back ride, and the like.

SEI

Sei is one of the most popular game among the Cambodian people. "*Sei*" refers to that object used for kicking or hitting. The word also refers to the game itself. The object of the game is to try to keep the *Sei* in the air as long as possible. Besides a lot of practice, a good player must have a high degree of concentration, a perfect body balance and coordination, speed, alertness and endurance.

One type of *Sei* is made out of feathers and large, dry fish scales. Cardboard or leather may the substituted for the latter. The final shape of such *Sei* is close to that of a bird or shuttlecock used in badminton. Another type of *Sei* is made of palm leaf-stalk woven into a hollow round ball.

Children learning to play the game may just hit the object with their palms, whereas adults kick it with their feet. A typical party may consist of 4 to 8 persons standing in circle, about 4 to 6 feet from each other and facing inside. One player starts by tossing the *Sei* to a player on the opposite side. The player to whom the *Sei* is tossed kicks it to another player of his choice. There is a lot of fun and laughter during each game. Good players can keep the *Sei* in the air for several minutes each time. Any part of the body, such as forehead, shoulder, chest, knee, etcetera, can be used except the hand in an adult team. The player who lets the *Sei* hit the ground or be "dead" must be penalized in some way such as having all other players pinch his nose.

LEAK KANSAENG

Leak Kansaeng, meaning "scarf hiding", is a game played by Cambodian children. It was popular in the countryside and played mostly under the moonlight. The purpose of the game is to teach the children to be alert and aware of their surroundings. The only object needed is a piece of cloth or a scarf: the *Kansaeng*.

To play the game, a group of children sit in a circle facing inside. A child is chosen to be the runner who goes around the circle. He then drops the scarf behind one of the seated children and continue to run around the circle. The child having the scarf behind him will pick it up and start to chase the runner. The runner is "out" if he is caught before reaching the place vacated by the chaser. On the other hand, when the runner succeeds in arriving at the vacated spot before getting tapped from behind, the chaser himself is "out" and becomes the new runner.

In case the child behind whom the scarf is hidden does not know it is there, the runner will make the round and tap the child on the back. That makes the latter one "out" and means he must be the next runner.

During the runner's trip around the circle, every body sings the *Leak Kansaeng* song.

ANGKUNH

Angkunh is a hard brown nut with a roundish and rather flat shape which measures about 2 to 3 inches across. The game played by the Cambodian people using this nut is also called *Angkunh*.

The game can be played by two or more players, young or adult. Participants can be divided into a male and a female team. Each team should have five to fifteen nuts. At the start of a game, five nuts considered as targets are arranged is such a way that four occupy the corners of a square with one in the middle. The playing team should stand about fifteen feet from the target area. Each player should try to score by rolling his/her nut toward the target nuts. A point is scored when a target nut is hit in this manner. A set of a game is either over for any one team which has used up all the nuts to be rolled or when the center target nut is hit. Points are then added up and the score recorded. Then comes the time for the other team to repeat the same thing. The team or player scoring the most points after both teams have finished is the winner, of course. Depending on pre-arranged agreements, the nuts can be rolled over by hand or by foot.

For best results, *Angkunh* should be played on relatively smooth surfaces. This game is even more popular during the New Year season, when children and adults play at length for up to several months in public places such as pagoda play grounds.

Defeated players may get pinched on the nose or hit on the knee with the nut by the winning team depending on the agreements.

REK

Rek is a war game that started about the second century and is very popular among the Cambodian people. This game consists of a 8 x 8 square game board and two armies made up of 1 king and 15 soldiers each. Two or more persons can play on each side, but only one piece can be moved at a time. The object of this game is to capture the opposing king by strategically moving the pieces.

To start the game the soldiers and king are arranged as follows:

s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s
k	s	s	s	s	s	s	s
s	s	s	s	s	s	s	k
s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s

One side will start the game by moving a piece forward. A piece may be moved as many spaces as there are vacant. The movement of the pieces can only be in a horizontal or vertical direction and not in a diagonal direction (see arrows below). There is no jumping of any piece on the board.

HORIZONTAL VERTICAL DIAGONAL

There are two ways to capture the enemy:

1. By placing one of your pieces between two opposing pieces.
2. By surrounding one or more pieces so your opponent can not make another move.

TEANH-PREAT

Teanh-preat (Tug-of-War) is the game played with a snake. It is not a real snake, of course, but several strands of rope plaited like a snake.

The snake is one of the gods in the Khmer mythology, and if one has ever visited the temple of Angkor Wat, one will find this snake carved in the stone at all the bas-relief along the wall of Angkor Wat which was built in the first half of the 12th century.

a) The players stand around and choose the captains of their teams. Teams can be mixed males and females. They can be one of males and one of females.
b) The snake is stretched out straight on the ground with equal amounts on either side of a line.
c) The teams take up their positions facing each other on either side of the line.
d) The referee's whistle is in his mouth, and as soon as both sides are ready, the tussle will begin.
e) The team wins which pulls the first person or/the other team across the line.

EXAMPLE OF LEISURE READING: *THE WOLF*

Once upon a time, a wolf started the day by looking for some prey and finally arrived at a muddy pond with a lot of fish and crayfish. The wolf thought that was his lucky day since he caught many crayfish in no time at all.

A crayfish told the wolf: " We will be your food for today but we won't taste any good as we are all covered with mud. It would be better for you to clean us first by bringing us to a clear water pond."

"How can I bring all of you ?" the wolf asked.

The crayfish answered, "You have to lie down in the water and we will grab onto your hair. This way you can bring us all in not many trips".

The greedy wolf followed the advice of the crayfish and

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made several trips back and forth, until all the fish, crayfish, and crabs were in the clear water.

When the fish, crayfish, and crabs knew that all their friends and relatives were finally brought to the clear water, all of them dived to the safety of the deep water. The wolf watched all of them disappear into the deep water and this made him very angry. The angry wolf persuaded all of the large animals, like the tiger, the elephant, the rhinoceros, etc., to help drain the lake so that he could get the fish, crayfish, and crabs. The pythons served as dikes and the other animals proceded to drain the water.

The animals in the water gathered with fear that the wolf would get them all when the water got low enough.

A fish said: "I know that a rabbit has saved many from death and danger. I will go and find him and ask for help." The fish slipped away one night and searched for the rabbit. Finally, the fish met the rabbit.

– "Where are you going?" asked the rabbit.

– "I am glad to see you. You are admired throughout the forests for your intellegence, kindness, and shrewdness. It is also said that you will help those that are in trouble," replied the fish.

– "What is your problem?" asked the rabbit.

– All the large animals and birds are trying to drain the lake so the angry wolf can eat all of my friends that are hiding at the bottom of the lake. If you can help us we will be very grateful to you and we will never forget your kindness," replied the fish.

The rabbit thought for a while and then told the fish: "Go back to your friends and tell them I will do my best to help."

After returning to the lake, the fish told the others and they were all delighted and relieved.

The next morning, the rabbit arrived and stood watching the large animals and birds drain the water from the lake. The rabbit had brought a leaf that was eaten by worms and showed it to the large animals.

Then the rabbit shouted: "Look, everyone! This is a message from the God King. The God King has said that he is coming to this world to cut the wings of eagles, the beaks of cranes, to chop the heads of wolves and pull the tusks of the elephants."

After hearing these threatening words all the larger animals and birds ran into the forest. In the confusion, some animals were stepped on and others that could not escape were drowned and became food for the fish and crayfish in the lake.

From then on, all the animals respected and regarded the rabbits as scholars.

Cambodian Proverbs:

"Death or survival depends on the tongue."

"One who can turn the tongue can turn the world."

Appendix

Cambodian New Year

Unlike the Chinese or the European New Years, Cambodian New Year's Day occurs on April 13th or sometimes on April 14th each year.

According to various documents and ancient stories, the Cambodians have had two types of calendars: the lunar and the solar.

THE LUNAR

MONTH NAME	SYMBOL		
1. *Miggage*	(deer)	29 days	November-December
2. *Boss*	(crab)	30 days	December-January
3. *Miak*	(monkey)	29 days	January-February
4. *Phalkun*	(ox)	30 days	February-March
5. *Chetr*	(tiger)	29 days	March-April
6. *Pisakh*	(buffalo)	30 days	April-May
7. *Ches**	(goat)	29-30 da.	May-June
8. *Asadh*	(lion)	30 days	June-July
9. *Srap*	(Flower)	29 days	July-August
10. *Phatrabod*	(rhino)	30 days	August-September
11. *Assoch*	(horse	29 days	September-October
12. *Kaddik*	(chicken)	30 days	October-November

The lunar year, which has twelve months, has only 354 days.

* The year that one day is added during the month of Ches has 355 days

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THE SOLAR

The solar year has 12 months and 365 days, or sometimes 366 days:

MONTH NAME	SYMBOL		
1. *Mesa*	(sheep, goat)	30 days	April
2. *Usaphia*	(ox)	31 days	May
3. *Mithona*	(couple)	30 days	June
4. *Kakkada*	(crab)	31 days	July
5. *Seiha*	(lion)	31 days	August
6. *Kannha*	(girl)	30 days	September
7. *Tola*	(scale)	31 days	October
8. *Vichika*	(scorpion)	30 days	November
9. *Thnu*	(arrow)	31 days	December
10. Makara	(shark)	31 days	January
11. Kompha	(jar)	28 or 29 days	February
12. Mina	(fish)	31 days	March

It has been noted that the Gregorian calendar was introduced in Cambodia during the French period, but the Cambodians never celebrated their New Year's Day on the first of January.

DAYS OF THE WEEK

1. *Atit*	Sunday
2. *Chand*	Monday
3. *Angkiar*	Tuesday

4. *Puth*	Wednesday
5. *Prahas*	Thursday
6. *Sok*	Friday
7. *Sao*	Saturday

There are 24 hours in a day. Each day starts at midnight and end at midnight (12 P.M.)

YEARS

NAME	SYMBOL
1. *Chout*	(rat)
2. *Chlov*	(ox)
3. *Khal*	(tiger)
4. *Thas*	(rabbit)
5. *Rong*	(dragon)
6. *Msanh*	(serpent)
7. *Mami*	(horse)
8. *Mame*	(goat)
9. *Vak*	(monkey)
10. *Raka*	(rooster)
11. *Cha*	(dog)
12. *Koi*	(boar)

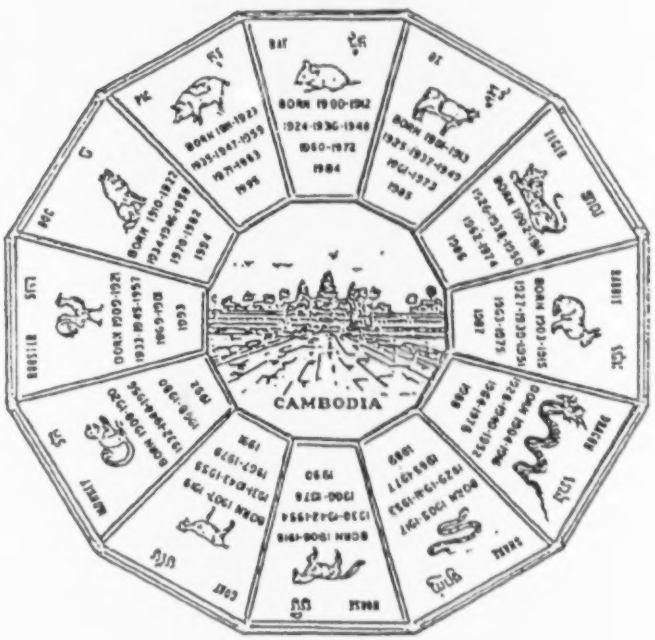
During the pre-Angkor period (550 A.D. to 1432 A.D.) the Cambodian New Year began in the month of *Miggase* (November-December) of each year. *Miggase* is the first month and *Kaddik*

the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. Nevertheless, the New Year's celebration never took place in the first month (*Miggage*).

From the post-Angkor period, 1432-1863 A.D., to the present day, Cambodians have used two types of calendar, lunar and solar. According to their own solar calendar, their New Year's Day starts in the month of Chetr (April 13th or sometimes 14th of each year).

The stone inscription at the old temple of Preah Khan also indicates that New Year's ceremonies were held in the month of *Chetr*. Moreover, a Chinese scholar, Tcheou-Ta-Kouan, who visited Cambodia in 1295-1297, described in his research book that in the month of *Chetr* (April), Cambodians celebrated their festival. During the festival, they played a game called Chhoung. He further observed people bringing with them the Buddha statues to the temples to give them their annual bath.

CAMBODIAN YEARS



What do the Cambodians do during the New Year's holidays?

By the New Year, they must have all types of foods ready and have some new clothing and other materials such as candles, incense sticks, special paper to decorate the house. They clean the house and decorate it with flags, flowers, lanterns, and so on. In front of the house, they set a table filled with candles, incense sticks, perfume and fruits to receive new *Devada* (Angel or God).

Throughout the entire country, the Khmer people enjoy their New Year's ceremonies for at least three days beginning on April 13th, or sometimes April 14th. In some parts of the country, people play popular games, popular music and folk dances even several days before and after the New Year's Day. They observe the New Year's celebration according to the season of *Sankrant* (the season for sacrifice of the New Year in accordance with the Cambodian solar calendar).

Three Important Days in the New Year:

1. The first day (*Sankrant* Day) is the day of entry into New Year.
2. The second day (*Vanabad* Day) is the middle day which divides the old year and the new year.
3. The third day (*Thngat-loeung-sak*) is the day to which a new era is added.

During the first day of the New Year in particular, the Khmers solemnly receive the new Devada who has the responsibility of looking after the well-being of mankind for a year.

Religion has a deep root in the Khmer traditional society not only on the artistic and cultural life but it also shaped the personality and the mentality of the Khmer people entirely. The pagoda, the supreme and sacred place of Buddhism, is considered the pillar of the Khmer society. Everybody spends one's life all around it. The Khmer pagoda is the best example of a social, medical, spiritual and artistic center of the Khmer people. All private or socio-economic problems in the community usually find their satisfactory solution in the pagoda. Therefore, during a three-day New Year celebration, the Khmers go to the pagoda bringing food and some offering to the Buddhist monks. They request that the monks recite and preach the Buddha's doctrines. They, especially on the third day of the New Year, give an annual bath not only to Buddha statues, but also to the monks, the elderly people and the teachers. The monks are invited to

chant the Dharma in order to consecrate good deeds to the dead.

In addition, they offer some presents such as clothes, victual and money to people who are highly respected such as parents, grandparents, or elderly people. Charity in this manner is also given to the poor during the New Year time.

During the Khmer New Year's holidays, some people like to pay a visit to historical places such as the temples of Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, etcetera, while others prefer to visit their relatives. In the countryside, people walk from one village to another in order to play games, to watch dances or to dance themselves. Numerous popular games are played throughout the whole country.

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